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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5554  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0110  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3797  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001045

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IR AND SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2019

TAGS: [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: AN IRANIAN UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE'S VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) On August 13, Public Affairs Officer hosted UNESCO Educational Program Officer, G. Reza Samarbakhsh for a discussion of joint programming opportunities. Samarbakhsh, an Iranian citizen, works out of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, but has oversight of UNESCO educational programs in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. He visits Turkmenistan on a quarterly basis, and is very interested in working with the USG on potential projects of joint interest. Prior to discussing these projects, Samarbakhsh gave PAO an outline of the current atmosphere in Tehran and the education system in Iran.

12. (C) Samarbakhsh reported that contrary to reports in the mainstream media, regular protests continue in Tehran. He estimated that there are over 5,000 new political prisoners in Iranian jails after this summer's post-election protests and that hundreds have already been executed. Despite a government clamp-down, protests continue. In downtown Tehran, every night between 10:00 and 10:30 p.m. people go to their balconies, covered in their robes or behind screens, and scream epithets denouncing the regime. He said that in his over 50 years of living in Iran, he had never seen such vivid displays of defiance. Samarbakhsh posited that those protesting are not related to a specific political party, but are simply tired of repression and denial of their "basic human rights."

13. (C) He said that there is a growing hatred of Russia in Iran, as many of the violent "police" that were brought in from villages to quell the protests in the cities were purportedly trained by the Russians.

14. (C) With regard to Iranian education, he described an ever-worsening situation. The latest statistics from the Iranian Ministry of Education show that 5% of students do not finish primary school, 12% do not make it through intermediate school, and 18% do not finish secondary school. This growing population of illiterate and undereducated people is a major focus of UNESCO education efforts in Iran.

15. (C) Finally, Samarbakhsh described the numerous business and personal ties that intertwine the leadership with the "so-called opposition." He said that traditional Iranian

norms of protecting those with whom you have business interactions or family ties would prevent any of the well-known opposition figures from facing any form of severe persecution.

MILES